

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-01 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCS-03 SCA-01 DHA-02 CPR-01  
OPR-02 A-01 IO-13 PER-01 OC-06 CCO-00 /092 W  
-----121341Z 036362 /45

P 121200Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9591

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0681

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, AMGT, XX, DM, US  
SUBJ: U.S. POLICY TOWARDS BENIN

REF: A. STATE 079999, B. COTONOU 0633

1. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY FIRST REFERENCE  
CITED IN REF A -- IT WAS SHOWN AS STATE 94446 -- WE PRESUME IT  
REFERS TO STATE 065587 CONCERNING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND ARE  
RESPONDING ACCORDINGLY.

2. EMBASSY ACTIVITIES HAVE NOT YET BEEN DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY  
NEW TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, SINCE WE HAVE HAD NO OCCASION TO TEST  
THEM FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES. SAME IS CASE FOR AID AND USIS.  
PEACE CORPS, WHICH HAS BEEN SEEKING AND OBTAINING LAISSEZ-  
PASSERS HAS BEEN ABLE TO FUNCTION RELATIVELY NORMALLY, EXCEPT  
IN THOSE REGIONS WHERE INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT CHIEFS HAVE INTER-  
FERED WITH VOLUNTEERS' ABILITY TO WORK AND TRAVEL. TWO  
EMBASSY OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES RECENTLY VISITED THE GAME  
PARK IN NORTHERN BENIN AND SUCCEEDED IN TALKING THEIR WAY  
THROUGH BARRICADES BY CLAIMING THAT THEIR IDENTITY CARDS WERE  
LAISSEZ-PASSERS. SIMILARLY, AN EMBASSY OFFICER AND AN EMBASSY  
SECRETARY ON SEPARATE WEEKENDS VISITED LOME WITHOUT DIFFICULTY.  
THOUGH EMBOFF WAS STOPPED AT BARRICADES, HE ARGUED THAT HE  
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DID NOT NEED LAOSSEZ-PASSER SINCE HE WAS LEAVING COUNTRY.  
BORDER AUTHORITIES WERE COOPERATIVE. IN NO INSTANCE, HOWEVER,  
DID WE INFORM BENINESE AUTHORITIES OF INTENDED TRAVEL, WHICH  
PROBABLY ACCOUNTS FOR LAXITY ON PART OF MILITARY AND BORDER  
AUTHORITIES.

3. OTHER EMBASSIES HAVE NOT BEEN SO FORTUNATE. FRENCH

AMBASSADOR WAS TURNED BACK AT BENIN-TOGO BORDER APRIL 8 BECAUSE HE DID NOT HAVE NECESSARY LAISSEZ-PASSER/EXIT VISA. FRENCH HAD APPARENTLY MADE REQUEST TO FOREIGN MINISTRY IN KEEPING WITH DECREES BUT WHEN RESPONSE DID NOT ARRIVE IN TIME, AMBASSADOR DET OUT ON HIS OWN AND MET AN IMPASSE. WE ARE CHECKING TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE INTENDS TO PROTEST.

4. AS IN ALL MATTERS IN BENIN, THE KEYWORD IS UNCERTAINTY. WHAT IS UNENFORCED ONE DAY, MAY BE ENFORCED THE NEXT, AND VICE-VERSA. MOST OF THIS UNCERTAINTY STEMS FROM A NEAR-PARALYSIS OF THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY FOLLOWING THE JAN 16 MERCENARY ATTACK. VIRTUALLY ALL DECISIONS ARE NOW MADE BY PRESIDENT KEREKOU, WHO HAS BECOME SOMEWHAT OF A RECLUSE AND RULES THROUGH THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. ALL ARBITRARY ACTIONS ARE JUSTIFIED ON GROUNDS THAT BENIN IS STILL IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY. THUS WE HAD AN AMERICAN CITIZEN IN PRISON FOR TEN DAYS BEFORE WE LEARNED ACCIDENTALLY THAT HE WAS BEING HELD (REF B). HE IS STILL IN JAIL, AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE CONSULAR ACCESS, WE CANNOT GET ANY DIFINITE INFORMATION ON HIS RELEASE DATE. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT HE HAS BEEN CLEARED OF ANY SUSPICION, BUT HIS RELEASE REQUIRES THE SIGNATURE OF THE POLICE CHIEF, WHO, A LA CATCH-22, IS ALWAYS AWAY FROM HIS OFFICE WHEN US OFFICIALS CALL.

5. WHILE WE CONTINUE STRONGLY TO RECOMMEND THAT WE NOT COMPLY WITH BENINESE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, WE ARE DEFINITELY IN THE MINORITY NOW THAT THE FRENCH SEEM TO HAVE BROKEN RANKS ON THE LAISSEZ-PASSER ISSUE. WHEN IT BECOMES APPARENT TO THE BENINESE THAT ONLY THE US AND GERMANY ARE NOT COMPLYING WITH DECREE, CONFIDENTIAL

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WE CAN EXPECT GPRB EFFORTS TO MAKE US COMPLY. WHILE WE CANNOT PREDICT EXACTLY WHAT FORM THESE EFFORTS WILL TAKE, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THEY WILL INTERFERE WITH OUR OPERATIONS IN BENIN. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT CONSIDER RECIPROCAL TREATMENT OF BENINESE DIPLOMATS IN US. THOMPSON

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES, TRAVEL CONTROLS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977COTON000681  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 STATE 79999, 77 COTONOU 633  
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**Review Media Identifier:**  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2835840  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** U.S. POLICY TOWARDS BENIN  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINT, PINS, AMGT, XX, DM, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009